

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3655

INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION BERLIN

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 10733

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: EPPLER RESIGNS

REF: BONN 10594

1. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, ERHARD EPPLER(SPD),FEDERAL AID MINISTER, HAS RESIGNED. HE DID SO FOLLOWING A CABINET MEETING ON JULY 5 IN WHICH HIS PLANS FOR THE GERMAN AID PROGRAM, WHILE NOT TOTALLY REJECTED BY APEL AND SCHMIDT, WERE CHANGED ENOUGH , EPPLER SAID, TO BE UNACCEPTABLE.

2.THE IMPLICATIONS OF HIS RESIGNATION FOR GERMAN AID IN THE FUTURE ARE BEING REPORTED SEPTEL, BUT THE POLITICAL ASPECT IS ALSO OF INTEREST. EPPLER'S RESIGNATION WILL CAUSE FEW TEARS. HE HAS BEEN BOTH CLUMSY AND ARROGANT AND OWED HIS PORTFOLIO MORE TO HIS CAREFUL CULTIVATION
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OF WILLY BRANDT THAN EITHER TO ABILITY OR TO A STRONG

POLITICAL BASE.

3. EPPLER HAS LONG BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH THE SPD'S LEFT WING, THOUGH HE IS MORE OF AN OPPORTUNIST THAN AN IDEOLOGUE, AND HIS RESIGNATION MAY BE TAKEN BY THAT WING AS A GAUNTLET THROWN BY SCHMIDT AND LEAD TO AN OPEN FIGHT WITHIN THE PARTY. THAT POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER, IS QUITE REMOTE.

4. THE SPD'S LEFT WING HAS ALWAYS BEEN FAR WEAKER THAN ONE WOULD HAVE SUPERFICIALLY JUDGED BY THE NOISE BRANDT PERMITTED IT TO MAKE, AND SCHMIDT HAS AGAIN AND AGAIN MADE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT, AS CHANCELLOR, HE WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY NONSENSE FROM IT. INDEED HIS DISLIKE OF THE PARTY'S DOCTRINAIRE LEFT PLUS HIS QUITE OPEN DISDAIN FOR EPPLER MADE EPPLER'S DEPARTURE FROM THE CABINET MERELY A MATTER OF TIME. BUT AS THE AID PROGRAM ITSELF IS THE OSTENSIBLE ISSUE, THE RESIGNATION IS NOT OBVIOUSLY EITHER PERSONAL OR POLITICAL, WHICH IS STILL ANOTHER REASON A SERIOUS INTRA-SPD FIGHT IS UNLIKELY.

5. EPPLER'S SUCCESSOR WILL BE HANS-JUERGEN WISCHNEWSKI, WHO HAD THE JOB ONCE BEFORE, 1966-68. HE CAN BE COUNTED ON TO BE NEITHER INVENTIVE NOR ARGUMENTATIVE NOR IN ANY WAY TROUBLESOME FOR SCHMIDT AS THE CHANCELLOR SQUEEZES THE BUDGET IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL INFLATION.
HILLENBRAND

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